



★ PART TWO ★

*Current Hispanic-American Members*



## ★ INTRODUCTION ★

# *Current Hispanic-American Members*

Nearly two centuries ago, Territorial Delegate Joseph Marion Hernández of Florida became the first Hispanic American to serve in the national legislature. Since then, 90 Hispanic Americans have followed in his footsteps.<sup>1</sup> The history of Hispanic representation in Congress contains many of the same themes that resonate in the larger chronicle of American democracy: a pioneering spirit, times of struggle and times of perseverance, the gradual attainment of power, and outstanding legislative achievements.

The 30 Hispanic Americans who currently serve in the 112th Congress (2011–2013) have inherited that long historical legacy which extends to Hernández. These 26 Representatives, one Delegate, one Resident Commissioner, and two Senators make up one of the largest groups of Hispanic legislators to serve in the history of the institution. Remarkably, they also account for nearly one-third of all the Hispanics who have ever served in Congress.

The 30 profiles in this section contain information on precongressional careers, elections, committee and leadership assignments, and legislative achievements. Because these Members are incumbent, comprehensive accounts of their congressional careers must await a later date. Their profiles are arranged into two distinct groups. First, the 24 Hispanic Americans who have served two or more terms in Congress are arranged in alphabetical order and profiled in 750-word entries. Second, the six freshman Hispanic Members of the 112th Congress appear at the end of this section and are profiled in résumé format entries. All current Members were given the opportunity to review their profiles before the book was published.

Among the current Members profiled in this section is Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida who, with 23 years of service as of the closing date of this volume, is the longest-serving current Hispanic Member of Congress. First elected to the House in a special election in August 1989, Ros-Lehtinen was also the first Cuban American to serve in Congress and eventually became one of the first Hispanic women to chair a standing committee (Foreign Affairs in the 112th Congress). Also included in this section is Robert Menendez of New Jersey, who became one of the highest ranking Hispanics ever to serve in the House, chairing the Democratic Caucus from 2002 until his appointment to the U.S. Senate in 2006.

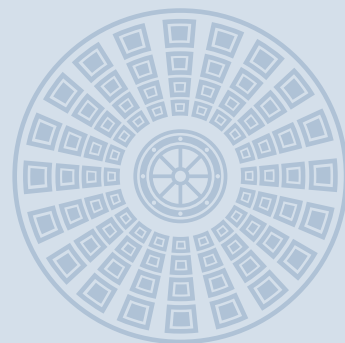
As incumbent Members retire, we will expand their profiles in the hopes of detailing and analyzing their congressional careers. For the foreseeable future, their profiles will be updated in an online version of *Hispanic Americans in Congress*—located at <http://history.house.gov>—and will reflect their individual contributions to the rich history of Hispanic Americans in Congress.

<sup>1</sup> The closing date for this volume was September 1, 2012.

## KEY TO MEMBER TITLES



SENATOR



REPRESENTATIVE



TERRITORIAL DELEGATE/  
RESIDENT COMMISSIONER